

REPORTS OF EXCURSIONS

LAKE COOLOONGUP (or White Lake)

On May 6, 1951, the W.A. Naturalists' Club paid a visit to Lake Cooloongup, east of Rockingham. This and the lake further south are commonly known as White Lake and Salt Lake, respectively, but it is better to replace these indefinite names by the old native ones, Cooloongup and Walyungup, which have been adopted by the Army in the new military maps.

Lake Cooloongup was at a low level but not as low as it had been a month earlier. The abnormal April rains had caused a slight rise in the water table. A water sample collected was analysed by Mr. A. Middleton of the C.S.I.R.O.; the chlorinity was 5.14 parts per thousand (equivalent to 300 grains per gallon); phosphate phosphorus, 17 parts per thousand million; nitrate nitrogen, none.

The lake is bordered with rushes and its bed is composed of a marl which causes the lake to appear white when the water is shallow. On the dried out shoreline, in the rushy zone, were found the dead shells of the pond snail, *Lenamieria proteus* Reeve, often in vast aggregations. Further in, on the bare lake bed, were the shells of *Coxiella confusa* Smith. Specimens of both were sent for identification to Mr. B. C. Cotton, of the S.A. Museum. He reported that those of *Lenamieria* were typical of this very variable Western Australian species, ranging from fusiform and elongate to short and angular. The *Coxiella* were identical in shape, size, sculpture and aperture with South Australian specimens of the species.

At the southern end of the lake the rushy flat runs right up to the Safety Bay road and Lake Walyungup. This flat must be covered in water most winters and in odd seasons is possibly wet through the summer. Patches of rushes had been burnt recently, exposing several burnt carapaces of the Long-necked Tortoise (*Chelodina oblonga*) and the exoskeletons of Jilgies (*Cheraps quinquecarinatus*).

Under rocks at the water's edge were collected several small amphipods. Small fish were present, probably the introduced *Gambusia affinis*.

Water birds were fairly plentiful. Around the shore on the west side were seen 16 Little Stints, a Red-capped Dotterel, 4 Greenshanks and a Little Pied Cormorant. The main observations, however, were made from near the main road on the east. From here were seen a flock of 50 or more of Hoary-headed Grebes, with some Crested Grebes, over which were flying some Marsh Terns (?)—apparently a mixed feeding flock. A number of Marsh Terns were also on their own. Two Blue-winged Shovelers were seen in female plumage—possibly a pair. A number of Grey Teal, numerous flocks of Coots, about 40 Black Swans and odd Hoary-headed Grebes were present. Besides these there were a considerable number of unidentified birds in the distance which were probably mostly Musk Ducks and Blue-billed Ducks. On the shoreline were a number of White-faced Herons and 4 White Egrets.

Generally bird life in the surrounding bush was at a low ebb. Honeyeaters were noticeably absent—they are so plentiful here when the *Templetonia* and *Dryandra* are in flower. The only flowering tree seen was the swamp banksia. In the sand hills on the western side the only birds met with were the Yellow-throated (Dusky) Miner, Brown Thornbill, Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike, King Parrot, Twentyeight and Western Rosella.

In the afternoon the members covered the whole eastern side of the lake from the shore to the top of the first sand hill. In places the sand hill was covered with a very dense *Acacia* thicket while in addition to the tuarts, which were present on the western side, there were many jarrah and zamia palms. It was different from the open country of the west. This forest country was carrying a number of birds, the commonest being the Brown Thornbill. A Fantailed Cuckoo was seen in the *Acacia* thickets and was also heard calling. A male Mistletoe-bird was seen and a Rufous Whistler heard. Other birds noted were the Magpie, Splendid Wren (in female plumage only), Raven, Yellow-tailed Thornbill, Grey Fantail (singing), Willie Wagtail, Red Wattle-bird, Silvereye, Searlet Robin, Western Warbler, Kookaburra and, near the lake, the Magpie Lark.

Two juvenile Stump-tailed Lizards (*Trachysaurus rugosus*) were found, one 7½ and the other 8 inches in length.

—A. H. ROBINSON.

A NEW VARANUS FROM EAST KIMBERLEY

Varanus mertensi sp.n.

By L. GLAUERT, W.A. Museum, Perth.

A slender species with well developed limbs and claws suitable for climbing.

Width of the head twice in the length, the height behind the eyes twice and one half times in the length; temporal region swollen, snout long and slender, depressed at the tip, as long as the distance from the anterior angle of the eye to the ear; canthus rostralis obtuse, slightly arched over the nostril which is nearly twice as far from the eye as from the tip of the snout. Nostril oval.

Limbs long and slender, the adpressed limbs overlap by the length of the hand. Tail long, compressed for the greater part of its length with a distinct double dorsal crest; length of the tail about 1.4 in the head and body.

Scalation.—Scales on the top of the head, large, flat and smooth, many bearing pustules, irregular in outline, largest between the eyes and around the interparietal, smallest on the snout; supraoculars about as large as the head scales with the central series of slightly larger transverse scales tending to become differentiated; temporals small but larger than the nuchals. Scales on the dorsal surface of the body small, oval, convex and smooth, becoming elongated towards the tail where they are distinctly